1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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621 and peoples, its organization and its personalities, and above all its centre, the town of Bida. It seems characteristic that of the people of 186 Sakpe, a backwood village in the centre of Bida Emirate, a large number have been to Bida, thirty miles away, but no one to Laboži, which is only ten miles away but lies in the opposite direction to Bida. There is only an apparent contradiction between this parochial outlook with respect to the community next door and this interest for the kingdom and its capital. It reflects the centripetal structure of the system of cultural 'co-ordination' which we identified with the Nupe state. But let us examine first, under the aspect of community and common life, its capital, Bida.

361 Bida as it exists to-day is a comparatively young town. It was founded by the first Fulani Emir of Nupe about 1860. The old Beni village of 162 Bida which stood on its site, a small village of four *efu*, forms to-day the 'old city' of Bida, its innermost part, known as *ba nîn*, the Inside. At the time of the British occupation Bida is reported to have had a population of 60,000. Later it dropped rapidly: the enormous households of the feudal lords dissolved, slaves and private armies disappeared, and absentee landlords moved out into the country to live on their land. The old trade-route to the south which ran through Bida was diverted by the British, who suggested the shorter route from Zaria to Lokoja.[1] Trade began to avoid the defeated, impoverished capital. Some ten years ago Bida counted over 30,000 inhabitants; the last figure, for 1934, is 23,286. But the cosmopolitan character of the population still betrays its character of a metropolis: all tribal sections of Nupe are represented, and besides almost every tribe of Nigeria: Hausa, Yoruba, Yagba, Bunu, Kukuruku, Dakakari, Kamberi, Koro, Asaba, Gara, Tiv, and many more. The Nupe of Bida total over 20,000; of the strangers, Yoruba with nearly 600 and Hausa with 400–500 constitute the largest contingent in this medley of tribes and races.

361 And now the town itself. From a broken-off plateau that forms its northern edge, from the foot of two flat-topped hills, the town sweeps down into the plain. The town wall embracing the wide expanse of Bida runs over the edge of the plateau, climbs down into the plain, crosses two rivers and opens its gates upon four roads. This wall was estimated to measure twelve miles in circumference. To-day it has lost its former importance. It has broken down in many places and has been left unrepaired. A go-ahead Administrative Officer some two years ago had ordered all town gates to be pulled down—to make room for the increased motor traffic (which never came). Also, the town no longer fills the space within the wall, and many ruins and deserted places inside the wall betray the changes that have overtaken Bida and its people.

361 Four big roads lead through Bida, roughly in the shape of a cross, from east to west and north to south. The road from the Kaduna river 363 enters Bida in the west, by the 'Wuya gate', so named after the village on the banks of the Kaduna. Just outside the west gate is 'New Bida'—a nucleus of New Bida—consisting to-day only of a few official buildings, among them the Emir of Bida's newly built residence. We leave New Bida behind, with its brick buildings, its tin roofs, and glass windows, and

[1] Dr. W. B. Baikie, R.N., *J. R. Geogr. Soc.*, 1867, p. 362.

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enter the native town. In the town as it presents itself to the eyes of the visitor there are but few traces of modern influence. There are the modern roads, metalled, with stone parapets and bridges of concrete. But the houses which line the streets are still the same century-old Nupe houses: the big, naked wall enclosing the compound and, hidden behind it, the array of small thatched huts. As in the village, the compound wall opens upon the street in the *katamba*, the gateway or entrance-hall of the Nupe house. Its style and lay-out and the state it is in indicate better than anything else the status and position of the people who live there. There are the round gateways of the wealthy, some painted black, some in gay colours, with ornaments worked in relief into the clay, and the roomy gateways of the royal princes, with window recesses, and pillars and buttresses to support the high-gabled roof. Some *katamba* have raised platforms in front of the door, carefully levelled, and stained with the juice of the locust-bean which gives them the appearance of smooth asphalt. Others have coloured earthenware plates inlaid in the clay of the wall; others show, worked in relief, figures and emblems which took the builder's fancy or which are to indicate the owner's profession, such as the likeness of the wooden writing slate—the 'trade-sign' of the learned Koran-teacher. And then there are the naked, sober *katamba* of the simple craftsman or farmer, and the dilapidated, neglected, and roofless entrance huts of the poor. *Katamba* follows *katamba*, house follows house, as we walk along the road. Side-streets branch off, winding between the compounds, a maze of small streets and paths, which are often just wide enough for a man on horseback to pass through. Here and there the walls recede and give room to an open square with a few trees, a little grass or a patch of cultivated ground, where goats and sheep graze, children play, and a few men, sitting in the shade, enjoy the hours of leisure.

We pass a blacksmiths' quarter, easily known by the open forges with their many doors and small triangular windows all round the walls. A little off the road live weavers and bead-makers. The road opens into a large square. To the right is a market, one of the three big day-markets of Bida, noisy and crowded with people who are buying and selling: foodstuffs, firewood, cloth, small pots. To the left, occupying one whole front of the square, is the residence of the Masaba dynasty. Two small bronze cannons formerly flanked the entrance-hall as symbol of the royal might. In the centre of the square stands a small throne hall; it used to be a pretty building, with painted and decorated pillars all round. But to-day, only a year since the death of the last *Etsu* from this house, it is already in a state of disrepair and neglect which symbolizes, more convincingly even than the disappearance of the bronze cannons, the passing of royal power. Houses of nobility and high office-holders occupy the other sides of the square. Walking on, past the long wall of the royal residence, we come to the street of the brass- and silversmiths. At all hours of the day their forges are busy, but not too busy to greet you with a little flourish of hammering on their anvils. Their womenfolk are sitting outside the huts with baskets full of brass- and silverware in front of them, offering the products of the street to those who pass by.

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dark and quiet. After 9 o'clock the market-place and the streets are almost deserted.

But let us return to our daylight inspection of the town: we were standing at the crossing of the four main streets of Bida. Turn to the north, and you come to *ldlemi*, the strangers' quarter of Bida, where Hausa and Yoruba are living in houses and huts built in their own tribal style and fashion. They are traders by profession, and shops and stalls line the long road to the north gate—shops in which you can buy everything at every hour of the day, from native food to a European wrist-watch, from the powders and amulets of the Hausa medicine-man to brass buttons or bicycle spare parts offered for sale in a Yoruba man's shop. The road to the east bridges a stream and a stretch of marsh-land that runs across the town, with its fields of rice and sugar-cane; it runs past another quarter of brass-smiths, skirts the quarter of the *masagd*, the Bida glass-makers, and leaves the town by the Badeggi gate, so called after a village thirteen miles from Bida on the small rickety railway line (the oldest railway line in Nigeria) which links Baro on the Niger with Minna on the main line of the Nigerian Railway. The south road crosses another stream, with yellowish, dirty water in which children are bathing, grooms watering horses, and women washing their clothes and cleaning pots and pans. It runs on through a thickly populated part of the town, past a beautiful old mosque perched precariously on the edge of a deep trench; another day-market, and another royal residence. Another weavers' quarter, and another group of blacksmiths. Old Bida and New Bida mix for a while: still inside the town walls are Prison and Hospital; on the other side the Native Administration Workshops and the Middle School. And beyond this, the European Reservation, the Government Offices, and then open fields and farms.

This, then, is Bida. Like all large towns it is both more and less than one community. More, in that contacts, communications, and forms of intercourse stretch far beyond the town boundaries; and less, in that within the town walls of Bida there exists a vast number of different, almost independent, strata and 'areas of common life'. Some, perhaps the weakest and least tenacious, are defined by tribal origin. The social differentiation of rich and poor, of social status and political rank, create others—strata in which life is lived in different fashion, in which different values are valid and different patterns of behaviour accepted as normal. But we have also observed the division of the town into three large districts, almost exact copies of each other, each with its day-market, its quarter of craftsmen, and its royal residence. The three districts are separated, geographically, by the two streams which run through Bida, and they are spoken of as three *ekpā*, 'banks', and given the name of the royal house that stands on their ground. Here we deal with units of a different order: they represent political factions, organizations of partisanship and patronage, which cut across the other social, cultural, and tribal strata. They reflect specific political and economic interests, they are vested, ultimately, in that paramount political organization, the state. But that we shall understand more clearly as this description proceeds.

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30. The Nupe quarter in Lagos

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31. The oldest mosque in Bida

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